

Questions for the Record
*Hearing on “2010 Census, Off-Line and Off Budget:
The High-Cost of Low-Tech Counting”*
June 20, 2006

Chairman Tom Coburn

Louis Kincannon, Director, Census Bureau

Spending Issues

- Current estimates put the cost of the 2010 Census at \$11.3 billion. Do you still believe that \$11.3 billion is an accurate estimate of what it will cost?
- Since 1980, costs for the Census have increased by billions of dollars per decade. Do you anticipate the cost to ever level out or to just continue rising indefinitely?
- Most of the Census Bureau’s re-engineering efforts, including moving to a short-form only census and offering the American Community Survey, officially went into effect around 2003. Although these will likely have a significant impact on the cost estimates for the 2010 decennial, why has the Census Bureau not revised its estimate of \$11.3 billion since 2001, prior to the re-engineering?
- Are there any areas in the 2010 Census that you believe will be more cost-effective than in 2000? What are they and why?
- Specifically, GAO has indicated that your current cost estimates are based on an assumption that the handheld devices will save you in administrative costs. In your 2004 test, though, the handheld devices did not work right and showed that they might make costs increase. Do you believe that costs should be estimated upwards to reflect that?
- Have you used your census tests in 2004 and 2006 to inform your cost estimates? (GAO says they did not)
- In January 2004, GAO recommended that the Census Bureau provide Congress with a master planning document detailing the plans for implementation and associated costs. At the hearing, you provided the 2010 Census Estimated Life Cycle Costs document, but GAO indicated that this was not as detailed a document as it recommended you provide. Does the Census Bureau have plans to provide Congress with a budget document in line with the GAO recommendation in the near future?
- GAO has indicated that the Census Bureau should develop as part of its budget justification an explanation of its key budget assumptions for the 2010 Census. As part of these documents, GAO indicated that these should have lower and upper ends of possible costs. Do you have plans to develop budget information for Congress to help us understand the likelihood of certain cost assumptions to increase or decrease?

Online Census

- One of the reasons you cited for discontinuing plans for an online census is that your tests did not conclude that savings would be achieved. Do you believe that it would be *more* costly to do the census online?
- The Census Bureau has raised concerns that an online census design would be used once and thrown away, making it a big risk if it doesn't work. Why can you not develop an internet platform that can be used both for the short-form census as well as the American Community Survey, which is administered every month?
- What is OMB's position on moving forward with an online census? Does the Administration support your decision to not move forward?
- How much has the Census Bureau coordinated with OMB on the issue of developing an e-government option for the Census Bureau?
- Similarly, according to the Pew Internet Project, 73% of American adults have online access. What do you believe is the proper response to the American public, which increasingly expects to access its government online, but won't be able to do so in 2010?

General

- Please also provide the Subcommittee with any additional information you feel is important for the record.

Brenda Farrell, GAO

- GAO has raised serious concerns about the rising costs associated with implementing the decennial census. Do you believe that the \$11.3 billion estimate is accurate? If not, what do you believe is a more accurate cost estimate for the 2010 Census?
- Why do you feel that it is so important for the Census Bureau to comply with GAO's recommendation to produce a master planning document for use by Congress and the public in evaluating the ten-year costs of the Census?
- Do you believe that the investment by the Census Bureau into the 500,000 handheld devices will help it achieve savings over the 2000 Census costs? Or, do you believe it will cause costs to increase?
- How likely do you believe it is that the handheld devices will not work at all during the 2010 Census?
- What effect would it have on the cost of the Census for enumerators to resort to pencil and paper for the counting of households?
- How feasible is it at this point to develop and implement an online census option by 2010?
- You mention in your testimony that the Census Bureau's technology contracts will cost around \$1.9 billion overall. How high do you believe the cost may go when the final cost is totaled?

Ranking Member Tom Carper

Louis Kincannon, Director, Census Bureau

- As stated in the hearing, the Census Bureau will not provide an Internet online reporting capability for the 2010 Census. Therefore, does the Bureau plan to facilitate a pilot Internet online reporting capability in 2010? If so, would the Bureau or contractor develop the online capability, and how will the Bureau plan to review the performance of the online capability at the conclusion of the 2010 Census?
- In 2002, the Census Bureau released a final report on the Internet Data Collection of the 2000 Census. In the report, the Bureau states that the 2000 Internet Data Collection was a huge success and that the Internet is here to stay. Why did the Bureau choose to rebut these conclusions in May of 2006, with the elimination of the Internet online data reporting capability from the Decennial Response Integration System (DRIS) contract?
- For the 2010 Census, enumerators will be using, for the first time, handheld messaging devices (MCD). Technical problems were revealed with the equipment in 2004 and 2006. If an enumerator experiences technical problems with a MCD while in the field on Census Day 2010, what is the back-up plan for the enumerator?
- How does the Census Bureau plan to train the enumerators on the new MCDs?
- To date, the Bureau has yet to put-together a comprehensive project plan for the 2010 Census that includes milestones for key activities and an itemized cost for each component. Does the Bureau plan to develop a project plan? If so, when will the project plan be available?